

# North Yorkshire Youth Mentors



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Year Two Learning Review Summary  
1st March 2021 – 28 February 2022



“Youth mentoring has made a huge impact on my mental health and wellbeing especially through lockdown and returning to school. I have become much more confident and learnt many different ways to cope with my mental health. I believe that it is super important to have that someone you can talk to who you can trust and go to in situations that are hard, and you don’t know what to do or how to act in them. Having that someone to talk to like [my Mentor] has made a huge difference for me as it makes life easier like I don’t have the world on my shoulders, and we laugh too and see the funny side of things.”

(Mentee, aged 16)



# Executive Summary

The North Yorkshire Youth (NYY) Mentor Project is a 3-year investment that started 1st March 2020 with support from The National Lottery Community Fund (TNLCF). It supports vulnerable young people aged 11 to 19 through intense, early intervention, one-to-one sessions and group work activities. The aim is to improve their wellbeing, future employment opportunities and to learn new skills.

The young people who can self-refer without parental consent or be referred to the service by other schools and organisations have presented with needs ranging from anxiety, and relationship difficulties, to depression, self-harm behaviours, gender discomfort issues, behaviour-, conduct-, eating disorders, suspected or diagnosed autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions. One in ten have some form of disability status.

## How many young people are being mentored?

With a team of 5 Youth Mentors (3.5 FTEs) in Craven, Scarborough (including Whitby and Filey) and Hambleton

(with a focus on Thirsk and Northallerton) and helped by the relaxation in COVID regulations and lockdowns, twice as many young people have been mentored in the second year of the Project compared to the first.



165 (56%) young people have moved away ('exited') from the service since the Project started. Most are successful relationship closures or referrals on, and only a very small proportion of young people (7%) choose to disengage from the service.

### Young people lead the service and choose the topics for Youth Mentor conversations

Analysis of a sample of 1,128 touchpoint / contact case notes updated for their caseload by just one of the Youth Mentors found coverage of 36 different topics ranging from anxiety/stress, school, college, employment, family relationships / home life to abuse / exploitation, anger issues, low mood, bullying to suicidal ideation, to PTSD, bereavement / grief / loss to offending behaviour and eating difficulties. On average each young person works with their Youth Mentor on 1-2 topics, but it ranges from 1-4. Customisation of the Youth Mentor's relationship, service and approach is a key success factor to meet each young person's individual needs.

## What's changing for the young people?

Quantitative measurement of the 'distance travelled' (progress being made) by young people finds **44 different outcomes** in evidence for the young people

supported in Year 2. In both years of the Project 6 of the top 10 outcomes have been the same for young people including **improved:- support networks, emotional and mental health, communication skills, friendships and relationships, and reduced feelings of isolation and loneliness**. Given the prevalence of challenges identified by young people with their home life it is encouraging to see that improved family relationships is a stronger outcome for more young people in Year 2.

Outcomes that were still there but not proportionally as large as Year 1 include early help offered tackling problems quickly, improved experience of healthcare services, increased accessibility to early help and emotional/mental health support and recovery from trauma / mental health challenge. Wider system pressures clearly exist that are challenging the ability to meet all young people's needs. Although strong in both years, the first year recorded proportionally greater outcomes for young people around their participation in decision-making and for increased engagement/ community involvement. COVID-19 has impacted these aspects more negatively than was planned pre-Project.

“Helped me to make better choices and be good in school and it helped me work out what was making me so angry and talk to school for me to make it better.”

(Age 12, prefers not to classify gender)

Some, though not all, young people set their own goals (typically 2-3) with the support of their Youth Mentor. New analysis of 171 goals for 66 young people tracked over time finds:

- There was positive and maintained progress for 142 (83%) of these goals
- There was positive progress but then some slippage for 14 (8%) of these goals
- There was no change / progress towards 5 (3%) of these goals
- There was negative change in respect of 4 (2%) of these goals
- There was positive / negative change at different intervals for 6 (4%) of these goals
- The average distance travelled for each goal by a young person which can be scored 1 to 10 for where the young person feels they are at vs their goal is +5

scores is achieved in c 100 days between assessments taken at different intervals in a relationship with a Youth Mentor.

Qualitative insights, from case studies with young people, one to one conversations with their Youth Mentors and an online survey completed by 27 young people in 2022 finds that youth mentoring helps young people with their skills, strengths and potential; their emotional and social capabilities particularly their social relationship skills; their attitudes (with increased tolerance of others in Year 2 e.g., around openly discussing gender identity); and their behaviours (responsible decision making, healthy, non-risky choices). The most prevalent finding from the survey was 23/27 (85%) of young people reporting that their Mentors has helped them cope with different things going on in their life better than they might have done, with 20/27 (74%) also saying they felt more confident, strong and positive about themselves. However, some young people find the need to use alcohol, drugs and cutting behaviours to help them relax and forget their reality. The lives of young people in abusive situations are extremely chaotic and progress can be slow and non-linear.

**The role of the Youth Mentor has been even more important during the pandemic** which has seen a slight shift in presenting needs and anxieties including paranoia.

### Dialog assessments

Sampled, but comprehensive, data available for 29 young people in one Mentor’s caseload finds that self-assessed scores for satisfaction across a variety of domains covered by this tool have improved for 22 (76%). Although it masks individual journeys the data suggests that a 10% improvement in these satisfaction



“Helped me through the week and to cope with tough moments, to talk to someone when there really isn’t anyone else to talk to.”

(Age 14, male)

How important has it been for you to have a Youth Mentor to talk to during this whole COVID-19 pandemic period?	No	Rank
It’s been really important; it’s helped me deal with things positively	14	1
It’s been a life saver, probably couldn’t have managed without them	10	2
It’s been a really nice thing to have going on in my life	2	3
It’s not been that important, think I’d have coped OK	1	4



*This is the winning photograph in a local competition submitted by one of the young people being mentored through the Project. They chose this medium because it made them feel good and built on their strengths, talents and confidence.*

## Stakeholder perspectives

Representatives from the local authority (Children and Families Early Help Service) as well as school staff covering roles such as SENCo, Deputy Head Teacher, Head of Year, Pastoral Lead and Designated Safeguarding Leads were asked for their views about the Youth Mentoring service, its value and sustainability. Key points were:

- The service adds value in a stretched system to meet SEMH needs of young people.
- It is the earliest form of 'early intervention' helping present escalation of issues.
- The Youth Mentor role complements school's graduated response and ladder of intervention providing contact time that existing staff cannot offer to young people.
- There is a perception that the service is effective and there is interest in the evidence.
- There is a willingness to explore the feasibility of blended investment models in future so that schools could commission the service and collaboration around this idea is welcome.

## Key achievements in Year 2

- 1 The continued engagement of, and progress being made by, the young people
- 2 NYY / Youth Mentor Team growth and cohesion across new / more projects
- 3 Perceived improvement in the reputation of North Yorkshire Youth

## What's been working well?

- 1 Young people remain empowered through the relationship with their Mentor
- 2 The Team's capability continues to grow, and skillsets complement one another
- 3 There is increased collaboration with other system partners, especially the local authority
- 4 Increased leverage is being achieved through partnerships

## What's not been working so well?

- 1 Resistance to the service by some schools (that have now been overcome)
- 2 Some schools are not as welcoming or as organised as would be liked
- 3 Struggle to fill Youth Mentor vacancies – national and local shortage

## Other learning

- 1 COVID continues to impact the service but not as badly as in 2020-21
- 2 Demand for Youth Mentoring outstrips the Team's capacity and demand is growing
- 3 There's still more to do around social action with young people
- 4 It can be difficult for Youth Mentors to close relationships owing to limitations in the availability of a peer network (Craven) or buddies (in Scarborough)
- 5 Young people in this Project are less inclined to want to tell their story to others



# SUCCESS STORIES

## 'T' wants to pay it forward to benefit other young people

The Youth Mentor was the only person 'T' would talk to and engage with. Lots of other agencies were involved including child protection but through their relationship over time, the Youth Mentor encouraged T to finish Year 7 and start college. The Mentor says: "I was able to help her through her recovery journey and her Mum as well. T has actually gone on to safeguard other young people because of her own experience."

## Finding creative ways of expressing emotions

"One young man refused to do a wellbeing diary" explains their Youth Mentor. "It wasn't for him, but I discovered that he liked rapping and he was able to express his feelings and thoughts that way instead."

## 'B' has really turned things around for herself and is starting to shine

"B has massive anxiety, family issues, is arguing with their dad and didn't want to visit so they just left school. B had no outlook for the future despite being a bright girl, but she wasn't interested in college. I met her in her community," explains the Mentor. "This girl always pulled herself down and had feelings of guilt. She lacked get up and go. But we've been doing breathing exercises to help reduce anxiety and over time things are getting better. Her relationship with her dad has improved particularly over the summer holidays in 2021. B did her exams and did well in her GCSEs - higher than she expected. She didn't have aspirations before that; and missed the start of college term, but by the end of September she had enrolled successfully and is doing a music course. She has made new friends and she has got a 'little part time job too'. She still has anxiety, but things are looking up for her. We're meeting fortnightly so as not to build too much dependency on me as the Mentor."



## FEEDBACK



### How has time spent with your Mentor helped you?

"She has helped me through all my lows, helped me with my self-esteem and working on having healthy relationships." (Age 16, female)

"Helped me through the week and to cope with tough moments, to talk to someone when there really isn't anyone else to talk to." (Age 14, male)

### What's the best thing about having a Mentor?

"Knowing that there is someone to listen and to talk to about your feelings and have lots of different activities to help identify your feelings." (Age 14, male)

"Just that time just to let everything out instead of like blowing up in lessons. Being able to talk about school and teachers and not being told not to say it about teachers." (Age 16, female)

### If you hadn't had access to your Mentor what might you have done instead to talk with someone about how you are feeling in your life?

"Still be arguing with my Mum, feeling angry and that would have affected me in school and with friends and teachers too." (Age 15, female)

"I feel like nothing would've changed, and I would've fallen into a bigger hole than I was." (Age 16, female)

"I probably wouldn't have talked at all to anyone about my emotions."

(Male, prefers not to say their age)

"I would be in a worse place than I was before."

(Age 15, female)

"Probably wouldn't be here to be honest."

(Age 17, female)

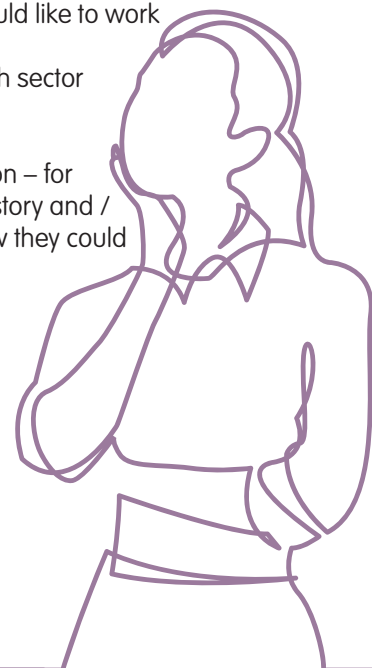
## THE FUTURE

It is anticipated that a further 175-200 young people will be mentored in the Project's third year, however, demand for the service is reported by stakeholders and NYY to be 3-4 times the current caseloads being managed, which are already, in some cases above the 31-32 anticipated volume per Youth Mentor. Waiting lists for CAMHS, thresholds for Early Help and the increase in SEMH needs in schools continue to drive pressure in the system to meet all needs of all young people. A reliance on external funding presents a continuous risk to the service though a recent 2 year award from the Humber Coast and Vale CCG / Integrated Care System in collaboration with North Yorkshire County Council Early Help and CAMHS augers well for the potential to make collaborative, and longer-term cases for investment through this route.

### Next Steps

- 1 Recruit two part-time Youth Mentors to complete the Project Team for its third year, help ease caseload burdens especially in Scarborough and North Craven and meet the clear demand for the service in the areas of focus.
- 2 Secure investment to retain the highly valued skills and expertise of the Youth Mentor Project Team beyond March 2023; and continue the upskilling of the Team in relation to trauma informed approaches.
- 3 Build capacity for Change Directions (another Youth Mentoring service delivered by NYY) between 2022 and 2024 working closely with NYCC's Early Help team, CAMHS and the CCG investing in this period.
- 4 Continue to build the evidence base about the outcomes achieved by the Youth Mentoring service and disseminate these to a wider range of partners including:
  - a. NYCC – Early Help, Stronger Communities and Public Health's restructured teams.
  - b. North Yorkshire Coast Opportunity Area / new Education Investment Area representatives.
  - c. The Woodsmith Education Programme steering group and Sirius Minerals Foundation Board.
  - d. Participating schools in the area and those NYY would like to work with in future.
  - e. The Early Intervention Foundation and national youth sector agencies.
- 5 Encourage safe, youth-led social action and participation – for example in the way young people may like to tell their story and / or express how they feel about where they live and how they could improve it with others - in the third year of the Project.

### Our Partners:





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